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CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY
OFFICE OF NATIONAL ESTIMATES

21 August 1951

Memorandum for the Director of Central Intelligence

Subject: The Threat of War between India and Pakistan

There have recently been a number of developments which suggest the possibility of an early outbreak of war between India and Pakistan. In mid-July the Indian Army concentrated the bulk of its available forces near the Pakistani border in the Punjab, with Indian Army leaders asserting [] that the Army had definite "proof" of Pakistan's intention to take forcible steps to prevent the selection of an Indian-sponsored Kashmir Constituent Assembly in September. []

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[] reported that Pakistan would attack in Kashmir on 1 October unless the Constituent Assembly plan was called off.

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[] On 11 August, the New Delhi Communist-line newspaper BLITZ published a markedly similar (though considerably more detailed) account of alleged Pakistani plans for a short campaign against India.

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Full analysis of the war threat is in process in NIE -41, "Probable Developments in the Kashmir Dispute to the End of 1951," being prepared on an urgent basis. A preliminary analysis follows.

- a. US and British observers are extremely doubtful that Pakistan is now prepared to initiate a war, and the alleged Pakistani war plan -- which Pakistan has officially repudiated -- may well prove to be a contingency plan not finally approved by the Pakistani high command, a document prepared without official sanction by Pakistani Army officers, or a fabrication. Until further information is available, however, the possibility cannot be excluded that the alleged plan is both genuine and an accurate reflection of Pakistani intentions, for the following reasons:

- (1) The alleged plan is plausible from a military standpoint. Pakistan could probably achieve temporary tactical success with an attack on Srinagar. Pakistan military leaders, who tend to belittle the quality of the Indian Army, may well overrate their capabilities for delaying an Indian advance in the Punjab and retaining their gains in Kashmir until such time as the UN intervenes. [REDACTED] flood conditions in the Punjab, where India's principal counterattack would presumably take place, are such as to preclude military operations there for the next six weeks.)

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- (2) There are strong reasons for, as well as against, a Pakistani resort to force. The approach of the Constituent Assembly elections and the UN's failure to check preparations for these elections confront Pakistan with a serious danger that its chances of loosening India's grip on Kashmir will be sharply reduced. It is true that Pakistan would incur grave risks in launching an attack. India's forces are numerically superior, and Pakistan might well be subjected to loss of East Pakistan if not to total defeat. The UN might be slow to halt the fighting, particularly if Pakistan were the aggressor. The fact remains that the present may appear to Pakistan to be its last real chance of saving Kashmir. Although Premier Liaquat Ali Khan may have been bluffing in a recent assertion that Pakistan would be forced to fight if India were permitted to go through with the Constituent Assembly plan, the Pakistanis may consider that Kashmir is worth the risk.

- b. There is as yet no evidence, other than the troop movements themselves, of an Indian intention to launch a deliberate attack on Pakistan. In this connection the following points are pertinent:

- (1) India has given no indication of planning a "preventive war."



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- (2) India's actions could easily be aimed at forestalling any Pakistani interference with the convening of the Kashmir Constituent Assembly. From the meagre evidence thus far available, it is quite possible that India's military moves were undertaken in direct response to the alleged Pakistani war plan. India's actions might also be designed to: (a) divert world attention from the Graham mission, which is generally expected to reach conclusions unsatisfactory to India and (b) divert the attention of the Indian public from its own economic troubles and from the current crisis in the ruling Congress Party.
 - (3) Throughout the dispute time has been on India's side. It is questionable that India would feel it necessary to abandon its program for peaceful absorption of Kashmir at a time when the most ambitious part of that program -- the establishment of a Kashmir Constituent Assembly -- is about to be implemented.
- c. Even if both governments are now opposed to starting a war, there is a danger that the situation may get out of hand.
- (1) Although both governments now appear to have firm control over the internal situation and to be in a position to suppress inflammatory statements, public opinion might become sufficiently inflamed to force one or

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the other of the two governments to go to war, particularly in the event of civil disturbances in Kashmir itself or communal rioting in Bengal.

- (2) The current crisis in the Indian Congress Party might lead to adoption of a war policy. Various leaders involved in the present struggle for power might advocate the use of force against Pakistan in a bid for popular support. If Nehru should lose control of foreign policy to Tandon's right wing Congress Party group, India's future course would be uncertain. Although the right wing group is closely allied with conservative business interests, which would probably be reluctant to undertake military adventures, many of the right wing leaders have a strong affinity for the violently anti-Moslem and anti-Pakistan doctrines of such organizations as the Hindu Mahasaba. 25X1

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